

**Diane Ludgin, Achievement First,
Appropriations Committee Hearing, March 24, 2011**

Good evening Members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Diane Ludgin and proud grandmother to twin 8th-grade scholars at Amistad Academy Middle School. Most of you know Amistad's reputation, because it was the very first Achievement First School and one of the first schools in the State to show that succeeding in school and life has nothing to do with where you live, what your parents do for a living or how much money your family has. Personally, Amistad has been a blessing for my family, because I know Demain and Donovan are getting the **very best** education possible.

I wanted to let you all know that I support Senate Bill 1195, because for the life of me I cannot understand why a **failing** school would be funded more than Amistad. More importantly, I don't understand why Demain and Donovan are worth less based on which school I send them to.

The school my grandsons went to before they came to Amistad had a very different environment. Their test scores were nowhere near where they are now, and their reading levels were low. They were so low that I began to panic and sought an educational opportunity in an atmosphere which demanded educational and personal respect. Today, they are reading on grade level and doing very well in their studies. They are both excited about going to high school, to Amistad Elm City College Prep, because they know they will get to college, graduate and become whatever they put their minds to.

I attended private school in West Hartford where the teaching staff was reminiscent of those I am in close contact with at Amistad Middle School. They are like artists. They are committed to each and every detail. They hold themselves accountable. They are alert and responsive. They have respect for themselves and the scholars they teach. I can see excitement in their eyes when they speak about their chosen subject matter and the responsiveness of their students.

I know I do not need to try and sell Amistad, the achievements are facts. However I do need to ask for equal funding for a school that mirrors what parents expect from their own children. It causes me to feel a deep sadness to be in a position to have to ask for what is already given to support the education of choice school scholars in New Haven.

I have joined other parents in past years to ask lawmakers for equal funding for our scholars. Each year people have tried to explain to me why it makes sense that Amistad gets less money. To be honest, at this point there is nothing anyone can say to make sense of this. My grandsons are getting a great education. They are doing better than ever. They are excited about learning. Why isn't that worth **at least the same** amount of money as the school that **failed them for years**? The State spends so much money on education, but they put the money into what **doesn't** work instead of funding what **does**. It's very frustrating, and I think it's time the State showed it believes in **all children**, not just some!

I support Amistad because it has made a huge difference in the lives of my grandsons. They deserve the very best and I am here to make sure they get it.

Thank you.


Diane J. Ludgin